

Free Tax Help

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volunteers.

The non-profit group gears their help toward low-income individuals and families. Open through April 15 at multiple sites across the state, most CASH Oregon sites are walk-in, on a first-come-first-serve basis, but some require appointments.

A list of site locations and times of service throughout Oregon is available online at bit.ly/CASHOregon. You can also dial 211 and a 211 info operator will help locate a site.

Daniel Mills, a southwest Portland resident who works in construction, said last year he used H&R Block's web-based tax preparation program, but this year his tax situation was more complicated. "I thought it would be easier to ask a professional and get help rather than research it on my own," he said.

In 2012, CASH Oregon helped 55,320 file tax returns statewide and for individuals with an average adjusted gross income of \$23,800. The average refund was nearly \$1,500.

"It's been very very busy," said Camille McDaniel, program manager of the Lloyd Center site.

Rob Justus, executive director of CASH Oregon, said the non-

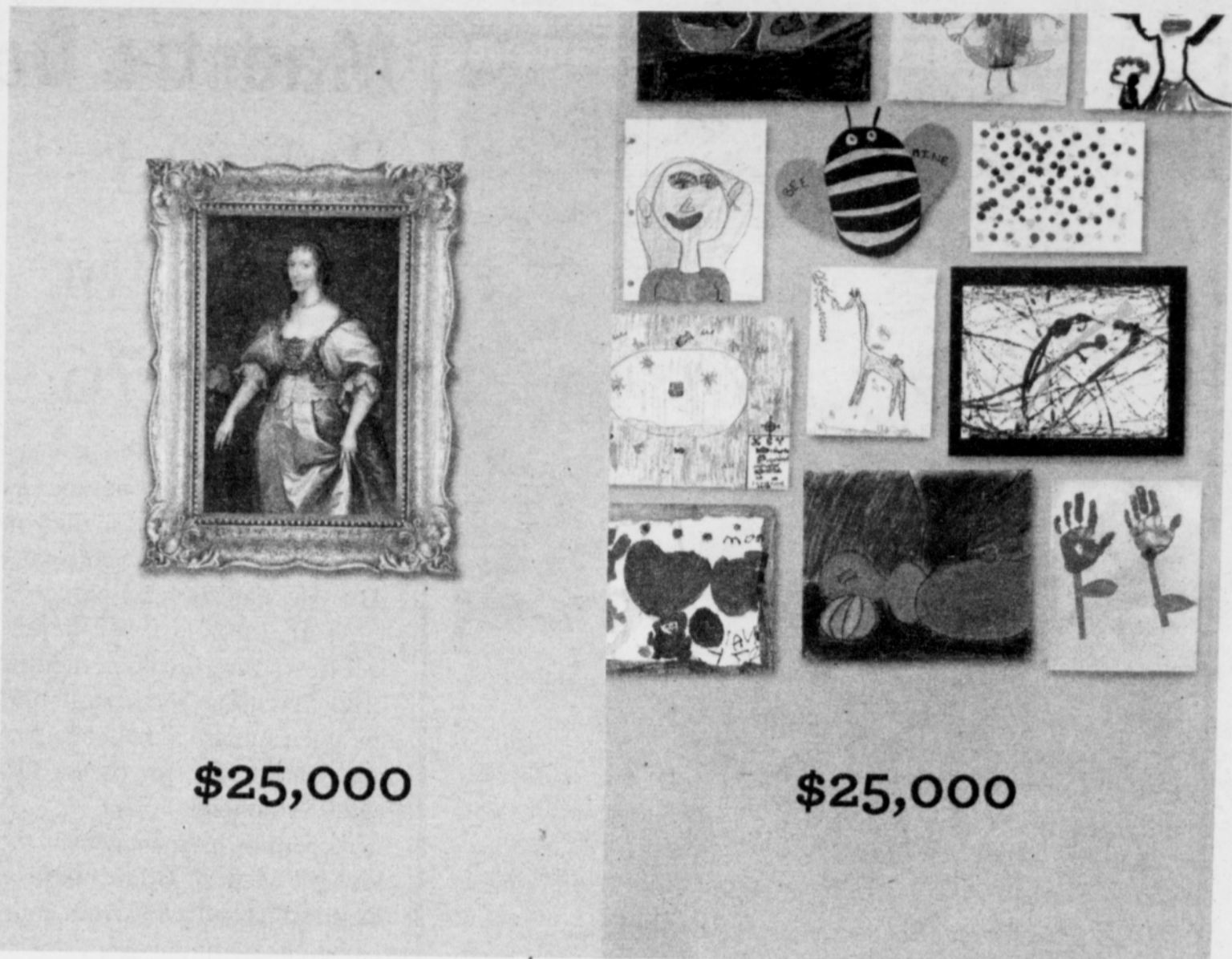
profit specializes in tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit and other family tax credits, such as the Child and Dependent Care Credit and the Child Tax Credits.

Justus said the free services have been offered at the Lloyd Center since 2005, but fears that grants received from the city and county to keep the services running next year are in danger due to the city's looming budget cuts.

CASH Oregon lists 36 sites in Multnomah County alone, some providing help in Spanish, Hindi, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Korean, French and German.

Nationwide and in Washington state, residents can find volunteer tax-prep help sites by searching the AARP Foundation's Tax-Aide website, the IRS VITA website, or by calling 1-800-906-9887.

People are asked to bring the following documents when they arrive at the tax help sites: Photo identification, Social Security cards or ITIN letters/cards for yourself and every person you claim on your return, documentation of all your income with W-2 and 1099 forms, your bank routing and account numbers for fast direct deposits of your refund; and last year's tax return.



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Committed to Cultural Diversity

Young, Black & Gifted

Recognizing kids on right track

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland's African-American youth are often caught up in a net of negative public perceptions brought by news of gang violence, the sobering achievement gap and school drop out rates.

But there's plenty of young black kids in Portland who are on the right path, making good grades, headed to college, and are making positive contributions to the city. A new photographic tribute recognizes the hard work of some of these students and shows that there is still reason to be optimistic.

"Young, Black & Gifted," a photo essay putting the spotlight on the accomplishments of high-achieving African-American students, opens to the public on Monday, April 5 at Portland School District headquarters at 501 N. Dixon St. and will later be moved to the Lloyd Center Mall.

The project is the brain child of Reiko Williams, the district's family and community engagement manager, who said she got the idea after having a conversation with someone who seemed shocked when she mentioned an African-American student that was excelling. After the conversation she worried that all the attention on the problems of young black students was drowning out the hard work of others.

"You hear so much about deficits and achievement gaps," she said.

Williams said the exhibit came together with a call for nominations of black students doing well district-wide, and the recruitment of a photographer and web developer.

Skylar Holt, a freshman at Jefferson High School is one of the 13 students featured in the exhibit.

Holt gets A's and B's in school. She does especially well in English classes, taught by Anne Novinger, one of her favorite teachers, and chemistry is getting steadily easier. Holt plans to go to college and is thinking about law school down the road.

"I'm enjoying it a lot," she said of her high school. "I like



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Skylar Holt excels as freshman at Jefferson High School in north Portland. Her contribution as one of the city's "Young, Black & Gifted" students is part of a new exhibit coming to school district headquarters and Lloyd Center Mall.